

THE EDGE



ISSUE 7

A NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY PUBLICATION

OUR THANKS, AS ALWAYS, TO

KAYE KOSSICK



EDITORIAL

On behalf of the Edge team I would like to welcome you to Issue 7, the penultimate issue of the academic year. We would like to thank everyone who submitted to the magazine, regardless of whether their work is featured in this issue, for providing us with the highest quantity of prose, poetry, and artwork the magazine has received to date.

As this influx of work coincided nicely with the busiest period of our university lives, I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of our editorial team, for surrendering their social lives to the cause.

Along with many new writers, we are pleased to announce that this issue is the first to contain artwork and photography from students at Northumbria, Newcastle, and beyond - our thanks to Eddy Robinson for providing the cover art.

We hope you enjoy Issue 7, and remember – we want to publish your work.

Daniel Bowman
The Edge Editorial Team

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Cover Art: *Tsereve ta rouf ma*



Eddy Robinson is a Final Year Student studying Fine Art at Newcastle University, and is currently working in sculpture, photography and installation. The piece here is one of around 50 photographic works that make up the new 'NheerNHONY-P' series.

He also Co-Directs The Musee Imaginaire, a weekly contemporary arts forum hosted predominantly at The Newbridge Project in Newcastle City Centre. More info, please contact ed_robinson@live.co.uk.

THE GOLDEN CITY

ROWAN BOWMAN

Peter and I grew up a stone's throw away from each other. We were friends all through our childhood. Then he went off to starve in a garret, and I went into the family business.

I've a family of my own to be proud of now. Jocasta is doing engineering at Cambridge and Xavier is reading chemistry at Edinburgh. I have to say my wife chose their names. Never forgave her own mother for calling her Sharon.

I've done very well for myself, big house, apartment in the Lakes, a vineyard in Bordeaux, the lot. There's a Bugatti in my garage and I've a Beamer on the road. I have Verdi in the slot, now, rather than The Clash, and there's a Rolex on my wrist. Conspicuous consumption, it's nothing to be scared of.

Poor old Peter. Not quite in the same league. I lent him a few thousand a while back. He's never repaid it. I shan't remind him tonight.

I'm here at his exhibition. Pretty girl at the door. Impressive catalogue...very...I had no idea. Good grief, he's done other shows, Nationals, I mean. Birmingham, Glasgow, London...in a gallery I've heard of.

Well done him.

We greet each other like the old friends we are.

He shows me round himself, there is hardly anyone else here, yet.

I stop by the first installation. I cannot get past it, in fact.

It is six feet wide and four feet tall, and the legend reads, "The Last Denizen Leaves the Golden Citadel".

Inside the case there is a cloud composed of millions of tiny acrylic beads, hung on gossamer threads so fine they're barely there. Above the cloud is a model city, and below it hangs an second city, a mirror image upside-down.

I sink to the floor to get a better view, lost in childish delight at the miniature. The inverted city is made of thousands of tiny bones, mice, or small birds perhaps. A gothic tracery of unimaginable patience. The detail is unbelievable, each tiny street leads to the central market place, with a cathedral ossuary so delicate and intricate it takes my breath away.

I am lost as my eyes wander along the streets, past tiny houses perfect in every ivory detail. Minute corpuscles of light pulse throughout the buildings. I have the eerie sensation that I am being watched from within as I scrutinise the model.

Above the cloud the city's bones have been sheathed in a skin of gold leaf, rubbed through here and there to show the skeleton beneath.

From the gates of the upper city a real mouse leaps to oblivion. It has been so perfectly taxidermed that it seems impossible that it is not alive, until you look to one side, and see that its cheek has been peeled back to show its teeth and its flank is open, exposing the plaster innards, decaying as it jumps.

I cannot see how the little mouse is suspended, or the cities, either, for that matter, and suddenly I do not want to know.

I become aware that I am crawling along the side of the case on my hands and knees, and sit up on my heels as a prelude to a more dignified ascension.

I see the price tag in front of my nose. Fuck. I focus harder. Yes, a million, and it has a red sticker next to it. And here was me intending to help old Peter out by buying one of his daubs.

I scramble to my feet.

'You're doing really well for yourself?' I look at him properly, Jesus, the guy has lost some weight, and...and his eyes, talk about the tortured artist. 'It's fabulous. You must be so pleased that all your hard work has come off.'

I meet his eyes. He really doesn't look well. He pulls a letter out of his inside breast pocket.

'You're a lawyer, Chris, see what you think of this.'

I peruse the contract. It is very well drawn, water-tight in fact.

'I'm told I'm in good company, Caravaggio, Leonardo,' he says tightly.

I lean across and pat his bony shoulder, force myself to sound cheerful, 'What price success, eh, Peter?'

What price do you place on a soul?

so we were in my
house except it wasn't my
house and my family were
there and you were really enjoying their
company

come upstairs I said
whispered
taking your earlobe gently in my mouth
over and over

so eventually I get frustrated and storm
upstairs except I didn't really go up any
stairs and I open my bedroom
door and lying in the bed is
gollum

and he's going on in his usual way
hobbises and precious and the like
and I let my eyes bounce lightly across his
damp scalp and taut flesh and I think of you and
think of him and think to myself
I might as well

so I climb into bed with gollum and I
start trying on the moves I
stroke his raw chicken arm and
nibble his salty earlobe but
he's taking no notice of me
just going on about
hobbises and precious
as is his wont

if you're not going to let me fuck you gollum I think I might just leave

and no he takes notice of me
biting into my leg with his sharp jaundiced nails
as I twitch and spasm from the sharp shards of cold
and he's going on about
hobbises and precious and now I can never leave and I've
never felt so tangible a sense regret and
he keeps me there until my mam
comes in with a tray of food and
understandably shocked by the situation she
uses her initiative and
stabs him in the brain with a fork

so what do you think it means?

ADULTERY

SAM SUMMERS

CONVERSATION

SAM SUMMERS

What are you doing?

Drinking the sky.

*Funny accent.
Australian?
Newzealandian?
I'll get back to you.*

You can't drink the sky.

I've drank bits of the sky before.

South African.

So have I.

So has everyone.

There's nothing special about bits of the sky.

There's nothing special about South Africa.

That's why I'm attempting the whole thing.

You can't drink the whole sky.

I could give it a go.

You'd get full.

That's why I'm sitting on the toilet.
Just in case.

It hadn't occurred to ask.

You shouldn't drink sitting on the toilet.
It's dirty.

It's vaguely arousing.

It's not.

Where did you find all those straws?

Why does she need all those straws?

In Subway.

To stretch out of the window and towards the sky.

They let you take as many as you want.

You're taking advantage of their generosity is what you're taking.

...

What are you doing in the girls' toilets?

Research.

Research.

GLASS DOORS

SAM SUMMERS

I want to tie a scarf
I want to know how all the movie stars and mannequins do it
I want to tie a scarf and wear it like a perfect two day beard

I want to feel the street beneath my feet again
I want to feel everything for the first time
I want to drink with the schoolboys and dance to the sound of popular trees

I want to find the fattest girl on the street and eat her like a Japanese wave
I want to sit with my feet over the edge of the cliff and let my eyes swim blind through the corridors
of a distant lighthouse

I want to let the very same fireworks which had me cowering behind glass doors launch me
screaming past the last seven years and into the welcoming caress of your vagina

NATALIA LISTASHENKOVA

Elias





The View (II)

Natalia Listashenkova is a Marketing Management student at Northumbria University and is a keen traveller.



Speed

These photographs were taken in London in 2011. Natalia always wonders how the same city can be different: sometimes it seems so busy and lively, but on the other hand relaxed and calm.

BUENA VISTA PARK

NED RICHARDS

Luckily, my sleeping bag is green. Forest green, to be exact, how apt. That way, if, by some common occurrence, I were to sleep during most of the day and stay silent for my remaining waking hours, I would be completely undiscovered.

I collect lichen. I pluck it from trees and add it to a ball. I know I shouldn't but it reminds me how fortunate I am. Last year it was the size of a softball, now it has far surpassed the size of a new born child and is well on its way to becoming the size of a fully grown human head. I call him Albert, the name I gave to my unborn child before I moved here, a whole life ago. In these wondrous surroundings, I see people snapping their cameras, jogging in skin-tight neon, keeping up that all-important façade of happiness, health and wealth. No real people, no-one who struggles as my fellow homeless people do.

This comforts me. As I said, I consider myself extremely fortunate, compared to my compatriots on Market Street, SF, who beg for scraps of burger, hot dog, or pennies to buy crack-cocaine. This elixir melts their minds, and leaves just their base instincts, ready to crumble off a rock into a bowl pipe or to be pinched and placed tenderly in a rolling paper, ready to induce dreams of a different life. A life free of having to fight over every dime, having to hoard every nickel and penny. Free of begging the owners of tiny dogs, surely fed better than you, for a spare dollar, a cigarette, a sandwich. Free of having to tolerate the scum dredged from the join around the edge of the bottom of the barrel, and being sniffed and sneered at as if you too are a reprobate, not fit to tarnish these wonderful clean people's day. That is not a good life, I promise you, not for those people.

I, on the other end of this vast group within society (like foxes, or pigeons, or rats, we cling to the hope of one day becoming valued, used for some better, functional position within the civilization that has been built above), have a privileged life in comparison. I have a regular visitor to my little habitat, a Blue Jay, striped with an elegant sandstone coloration and the mischievous electric blue that shimmers mesmerizingly in the midday sun, so inherent to this beautiful creation of the universe, and yet worn as a badge, a warning to other birds to steer clear.

In this way I can relate to my reticent accomplice in forest living. He is the only guest, aside from Albert, that I have to interact with; unfortunately not everyone who stumbles across my idyllic lifestyle feels as impassioned as I do about its tranquillity and humbly recuperative nature. When this inevitable occurrence comes about, one of three things happen; the discoverer either informs security of my presence, sparking a hasty but well practised evacuation to another part of my vast, welcoming, benevolent home, an inconvenience at most; they completely ignore me, disregarding my friendly greetings as they do the true beauty of the oasis that is Buena Vista park; or they share a cigarette, engage their fellow man in idle, meaningless small talk, and leave, feeling a little better at having entertained such an ignorant and unworthy scourge upon society.

The latter are the worst, somehow. The hint of compassion they show merely reminds me of the existence of human decency, and I devour it, starved for so long. Then, like an infant, I impudently expect more from them, until I despise their questioning, the reeling off of the stops along their trip, disappointed in my lack of anecdotes, and crave the moment when they leave me to rid my shrine of the ungainly memory of their presence.

“Harry? Harry! You’re gonna be late you lousy bum.” My wife cawed from her perch on the door step, her slender legs and slightly protruding womb, as well as her slight frame and inflated bosom, coalesce with her faded, sunset red sweater to produce a fleeting image of a robin red breast. I peered up from the fuming engine of my long-suffering truck, my face besmirched with the grease of a persistent amateur mechanic. Squinting, I focused on the façade of our terraced, coal stained red brick domicile from under the brim of a worn Cubs hat. This was our neighbourhood, the outskirts of the famed, possibly without reason, recreation of a Victorian London street, left to sprawl out into North Chicago and subsequently fall into dilapidation. In our removed little corner of England, I have learned to ignore the frenzied blasts from car horns, the insistent wails of police sirens, the clamour of thousands of disappointed, yet never pessimistic Cubs fans, loyal followers of the team holding the longest losing streak in the National Baseball League.

“Goddamn it, I’m tryin’ my fuckin’ best with this Chevy but it’s not having it. You think you could rustle up some coffee or a sandwich or somethin’, I’m gonna call Fred see if I can buy a bit more time, catch a bus or somethin’ maybe.”

“You know you’re gonna have to stop cursing like a trooper in a couple months Harry,” a pause. “You should start now. I read in a magazine that a hostile environment isn’t good for the baby even at this stage, so maybe cut it the fuck out okay.” My wife grinned at me as she hopped merrily into the kitchen, ready to forage whatever morsel may be lurking in the dark depths of the cupboards. I made the required phone call, informing my supervisor of the irksome events of the still young morning, and requesting my shift be postponed an hour in order to catch the bus all the way deep down to the old slaughterhouses. He obliged, a merciful leader. The phone clicked, signalling the end of the call, and (as if there were some mystical force looking down upon us mortals, that every now and then offers a gleam of light from some mystical place) at that very instant the engine dragged itself begrudgingly into life.

“You tell Fred you can make it on time now that the Chevy’s submitted to your will?” The wife tottered, although she had no need to totter just yet, out into the yard, a glass of frothy Kool-Aid in her left hand, a grilled cheese in the right.

“You know, it’s the darndest thing...” I fluttered a rare smile in her glowing direction, “I reckon we got another forty-five minutes...”

“Let’s go for a ride!” She exclaimed, clearly having missed my hint as it flew past ten feet above her small, shapely head. Into the truck we got; I, the inwardly disgruntled gentleman helping the lady who has just shunned him into the cab; she, the blushing lady, completely pre-occupied with her budding child, ignorant of my husbandly advances. And so we rode. As we set off on our trip exploring the forty-five minute radius we had outlined, the vast blue sky closes, as if by the flip of a sign on a string. Clouds, as white and foreboding as an empty wedding dress to a nervous groom, dominate the supposedly powerful sun.

White turns to grey turns to black, purple, unfathomable cloud. In the moniker of our fine town, “The Windy City”, there are two “I’s”. This thought flashes into my mind, taking hold upon the rapidly growing ledge of unease in the cave of my mind, as we two isolated I’s drive through the gloom to our ambiguous destination.

Looking over to my left, I see my robin, chirping and tweeting happily away about how dreadful the weather is in this part of town, clearly not preoccupied with the eerily desolate townscape through which we slog, the remains of a sidewalk evacuated at the imminent, unspoken threat of storm. Thunderous rain ensues. Torrents flow past the black rubber that anchors me precariously to the Earth’s outer skin. Headlights flail ahead. Give this guy a bit of room Harry, looks like he ain’t used to these rains, urges the robin, for the first time realizing the treacherous conditions.

The Chevy obediently pulls closer to the curb, slowing slightly at my command. The headlights become violent. They bustle their way boisterously further up the road, closer, closer. I suddenly remember my own headlights, as the vigorous pair at the fore become ever more present in my windscreen. Click. A red bonnet is illuminated, the robin gasps. Crunch. Sickening wind is forced upon my ribcage. No such luck for the robin, her protrusion now becoming scarlet, a beautiful merlot stain spreading on a lovers’ picnic sheet. The putrid smell of gasoline and rich, thickly flowing blood fills my air-starved nostrils.

At some point I seem to notice the robin screaming, squawking, a searing tirade wrought upon the situation.

“The fuckin’ baby Harry, what about the goddamn baby! I have to...” calm is realized mid-sentence, “I have to get to the hospital Harry, I think I’m okay but the baby, the fuckin’ BABY Harry!” Squawk, squawk, squawk. My neck sags forwards as the airbag deflates. It seems upon collision my arms were crossed over the wheel; one of them flops limply down from halfway up the forearm; the other seems welded to the steering wheel, as if the heat from my wife’s furore had smelted these two parts together, rendering them unusable.

The whine of an ambulance envelops us two like a cloud of thick smog. My wife’s inconsolable cries fill the air like the smell of rotten meat, and adds to the smog swirling around us. I look upon the scene as if through the windshield of my truck, hear myself cooing over my distraught wife as I heard the scrape of metal on metal through that fragile membrane separating us from the dangers of the world.

The robin was right about ‘the fuckin’ baby’. It was not spared. Albert was not what our marriage deserved after all. The robin drove me from the nest. I never blamed her. Somewhere inside her I believe she didn’t blame me either, much as her consciousness denied it. The robin perished; with no young to feed she stopped feeding even herself, so I hear. I have Albert now, it is a shame she cannot join me, I’m sure she would appreciate how vastly more enriching the forest is than a life of working in a factory, going out for drives, having hopes ruptured like an embryonic sac before birth, dreams suffocated in the very place they most naturally reside. No dreams are prematurely culled here, high above foggy Frisco.

PASSING CARS

M. BRYAN JOHNSON

Passing cars are
 passing thoughts,
 they flitter through
 the imagination
 A old Buick 6
 speeding down
 Highway 19 as
 though "*The baby's
 coming now George!*"

I've fished in streams and rivers and even
 a lake once but never in the ocean. The
 motorway is above my head and my feet
 are on the ground. "*I don't think we're
 going to make it George, pull over!*"

Passing cars are
 the way I remind
 myself I do not
 care about
 the birds and the
 bees
 all I know are
 engines, grease and
 oil pumping torque
 through a 16-cylinder
 monster

A forest ranger asked me to turn the engine lights off
 and I shot him, I had never seen someone be so
 upset since I saw my father cut his thumb
 building the new house (which is smaller than)
 the old house, who doesn't live there anymore.

"*Congratulations George,
 you're a father!*"
 she cries and then
 she weeps because
 her baby was born
 on the road

"Oh don't worry honey
 we'll find the right
 school for that"

W A V E S

M. BRYAN JOHNSON

the rocks are never asked
when they are taken
from the ground. They may
be used for bridges
or walls or God knows what,
massive structures
that the waves will crash
against all the same

A woman's eyes can pierce
into you, but only
because they are a particular
shade of blue,
"cold day on the beach in
January with a
wool coat and the surf
overcast"

waves do not affect the
eyes of a lion,
golden and sunburnt and
without fear,

Walking along a precipice is
not dangerous and
not brave, but only because
the mouth of the
river leads out to the sea
and a mouth is not
a delta, deltas are wide and wild and
vast.

the rocks are used to build
structures for God
knows why, and why should
they complain except
maybe this rock could have
been a bridge and
not a wall and that's a damn
shame,

The People who are know by
 the way they sweat,
 they tear down walls and bridges
 with wild abandon.

(I love them for this)

Squishy toes squeeze the sand
 shifting underneath
 swallowing the entire sea and
 it is warm like a –
 Children build castles out of
 the sand which
 are just rocks for children ages
 6 and under

the tide pulls you, sin
 and truth are the same
 thing, my god can't we talk
 about it?

- 1) your breasts aren't small
 they are perfect
- 2) your hair isn't fussy it
 tastes like going to bed

Waves crash back against the
 sea, crashing birds wink at me!
 and lounge across
 the rocks but they still
 devour and all this drinking
 is making them so unhappy so
 just take my hat
 okay?

Phoebe Stephenson is a full-time literature student by day, and illustrator by night, currently in her third year at Northumbria University.

This sketch was inspired by the 'Vegetable Lamb of Tartary', a legendary zoophyte in Central Asia.

The real plant, known as *Cibotium barometz*, was believed to have grown what resembled sheep as its fruit. The myth stated that they were connected to the plant via an umbilical cord, and would graze the land until all available foliage was gone.

Both plant and lamb would then perish.





PHOEBE

STEPHENSON

H tHe announcer
Y doesn't saY
P the Programme will
E continuE,
R Rather
R theRe is
E morE to come.
A you might hAve to
L Leave some of
I It.
T That's
Y prosperitY.

JOE REDPATH

I and I am not,
N as No one has inspired a

L sense of Longing in
O me, therefore I dO not feel
V as eVeryone says I should, but
E rathEr as I am



OSCAR
DEMPSEY

BLACK WATER SERIES



In his final year of Fine Art, Newcastle University, Oscar Dempsey works in the mixed media of performance, installation, video and text.

Dempsey's practice challenges the psychoanalytical theories of shame, disgust and guilt in reference to sexuality, seeing humiliation as a vital formulation of the human condition.

These are photographs from a series testing the limits of the human body under water pressure in different states to highlight parts of the body.



F A C E T H E M U S I C

CHRISTIAN GOODALL

I heard the door slam midway through my concert piece, the harsh sound reverberating around the empty auditorium and distracting me at the most complex part. Resting my hands limply on the keys to an unpleasant hum from within the instrument, I sat waiting to hear Emma's footsteps as she entered the hall.

"Don't stop on my account." She said, her voice muffled and view obscured by the piano's large frame. I smiled to myself. "Do you feel ready?"

"Do I sound it?" I replied sarcastically.

She took a few moments to reply, probably sitting herself down on one of the front rows. I heard a rustling, as if she was opening a packet of crisps. "I don't think you'll ever feel ready, Alex. But I know you are. Just remember what I've taught you and apply yourself."

"I can't play it all the way through without making a mistake." I sighed.

"There's no pressure to succeed yet. You'll perform better when you're nervous."

"What if I don't? What if the nerves get the better of me and I play worse?"

"Then you're fucked," she laughed, "and I'm out of a job."

I know she was joking, but I did feel for her. How I played tomorrow evening would reflect on her as well as me, despite the fact she's taught me the piano for nearly five years and was a patient and understanding teacher. I imagined her smiling to herself and subconsciously ran a finger down the side of my glasses during the silence.

"Would you like me to play it for you all the way through?" I asked.

"No, it's getting late. You should head home and get some sleep. You'll make errors when you're tired which will only irritate you more."

I quietly sighed in agreement and shut the lid, suddenly aware that the next time I opened it I would have an audience that filled the hundreds of seats in front of me. Ever since my fourteenth birthday when my parents bought me an electronic keyboard, I'd dreamt of a day like tomorrow: playing to a concert hall full of proud friends and family, as well as a sea of strangers who would hopefully keep a close eye on my musical career thereafter. Now, at twenty-one years of age, the thought petrified me. It must have shown on my face as I stood up and rubbed my aching neck.

“Are you worried about the bridge?” Emma asked.

“I can’t seem to swap the tempo and hand arrangement without hesitating, or hitting an incorrect note. I’m worried the transition will let the piece down.”

“Then get rid of it.”

“I’m sorry?”

“If it’s causing you trouble, get rid of it. It’s not essential. Create your own bridge that works for you. I was never a big fan of this one anyway.”

“What, now?” I asked. “You want me to write a completely new bridge the night before my performance?”

“I think you’re capable of improvising. You’re very good, despite your self-doubts.” She paused, and added with a chuckle: “You’re not going to mess this up. You’ll see.”

I grinned at the irony of her reassuring words, but decided not to call her out on it as she was probably as stressed as me. I sat down once again, opening the lid with a new-found determination to compose a new bridge in the next thirty minutes. Emma sat in silence as I experimented with different chords and intricate styles, not commenting and simply listening. I asked her for her opinion a few times, but she simply replied: “You’ll know if it’s right.”

“You put too much faith in me.” I muttered after a few more unsuccessful attempts.

“You instil faith in me as a teacher. I guess I’m not entirely shit if I can teach somebody like you.” I didn’t reply, concentrating on creating a melody in my head and trying to replicate it in practice. She took my silence as offence: “Not that I mean anything by that, Alex. You’re one of the most talented musicians I know. You’d have to be blind not to see it.” She laughed nervously to herself and yawned, the seat creaking as I heard her stand up. “I’m going to head off. Don’t stay too late, okay? I’ll call you a cab now. You’ve got twenty minutes.”

“Thanks Emma. Any advice for tomorrow? I won’t see you beforehand.”

“You know the piece; I can’t teach you anything else. You just need to get over your nerves.”

“You make it sound easy.”

“Face the music, Alex.” She said, loudly enough for me to hear but said in a tone that suggested she was talking to herself. “Taxi’s here in twenty. I’ll be cheering you on tomorrow. Goodnight.”

I sat alone for about two minutes contemplating her advice. Whether or not she had intended it, she had inspired me to create a bridge. I flexed my fingers and got to work, finishing the piece long before my taxi arrived.

“It’s show time.” Emma whispered excitedly from the side-lines, squeezing my shoulders and ushering me out onto the stage. I concentrated on drowning out the applause from the crowd and listened to the steady scratching of my walking stick on the wooden floor. Resting it against the piano, I took my seat and tried to focus on controlling my breathing as the applause began to die down.

Just seconds before I ran my hands along the keys, feeling for the right notes to start my piece, I became acutely aware of the eerie silence from the audience. Nearly a thousand people were sat just a few feet away from me, waiting for me to perform. And I couldn’t even hear a single noise.

Sounds became a huge part of my life when I was blinded at the age of six. That’s why music appealed to me so much.

That’s why silence frightened me so much.

I began to play, and with the rising sounds of the chords I became more attuned to the subtle noises of individuals within the crowd, calming me and allowing me to fully concentrate; a cough here, a seat creaking there. I made no errors; intuition and muscle memory overcame nerves and shaking hands. I didn’t need sight to play beautiful music. I’d been doing it for seven years now.

The time for the bridge came.

“Face the music, Alex”.

Face.

F. A. C. E.

Four simple notes with added flourish. Nothing spectacular. I spared a split second to imagine Emma’s smiling face to my left, and wondered if she knew she’d inspired me as much as she taught me.

I finished the piece. The applause was almost deafening. I didn’t even hear Emma approaching me on the stage and whispering in my ear. I didn’t even hear what she was saying, to be honest. For once, I didn’t have to rely so heavily on sound. I truly believed I could picture everything around me happening just as it actually was.

Sight would have only tarnished that mental picture.



MEDICINE

NATHAN LYTTLE

Sitting with ten
others, smiling &
stroking my legs,
licking the rim
of my glass

(waking up again
without breath &
itching at my
arms & legs
until they bleed)

dropping the last
of my sandwich
into my mouth
& then making
sweet eye contact
with a stranger

(rolling in bed
still wrestling with
my moaning, mouth
coughs up dirt
& always hunched
over into myself)

shuffling on &
then off of
the worst seat
on the bus
out of town
on a Friday

(running to the
bathroom with a
dull ache behind
my jaw &
a prang under
my red gums
to gargle all
of this away).

CHRISTMAS DAY

NATHAN LYTTLE

6 o'clock. Sister's woken up early,
already full of sugar. Dad lets her
open one present, quickly, then she has
to go back to bed. Mum and Dad need rest
before we drive to Nana's for more gifts.

We drift between houses on empty roads,
back at home and sister is still alight.
She runs and screams while Dad sits in his chair,
pissed up with shiny eyes and tight white lips.
Mum cleans away left overs into foil.
We wilt in front of the TV and play
some board games (no one even tries to cheat).

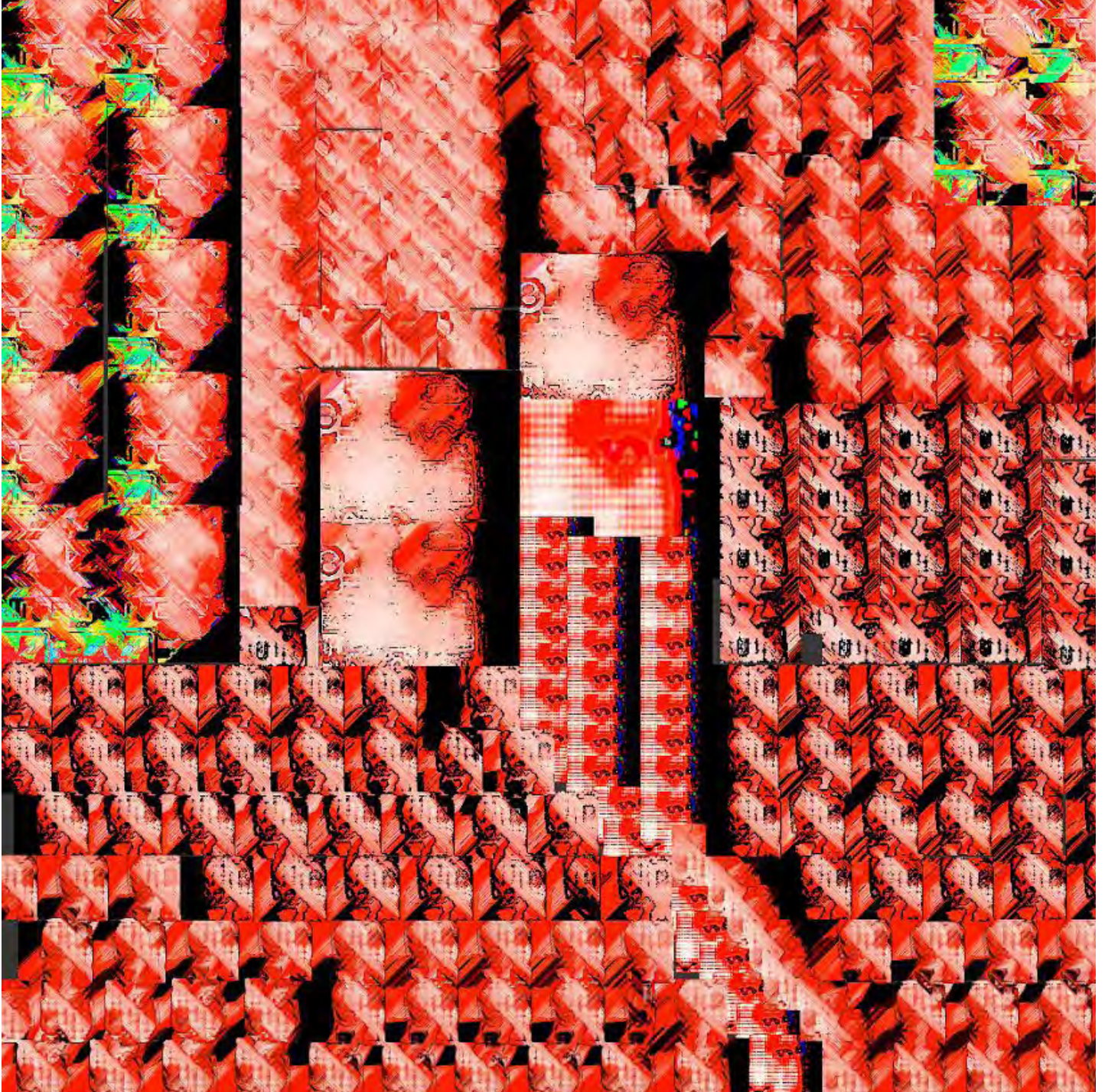
We love-yell at each other, then end up
asleep and red and white in our proud house.

SEPTUAGENARIAN CYCLISTS

JANE BURN

Surfing the undulating B roads;
 Tyres slicing surface dust
 Like a skater's blade through frosted ice,
 A trio of old men -
 Septuagenarian cyclists
 Pump determinedly on.
 Fleshless bottoms struggle to fill the
 Still baggy lycra shorts
 That on younger men would be bulging.
 Chewy, tightly balled calves
 Encased beneath turkey skin flex with
 Each cadenced rotation,
 One step ahead of Father Time and
 His bonily beckoning finger.
 Teeth gritted, eyes focused
 They measure out the precious minutes
 Of longed for retirement
 In turns of the pedal, gear change clicks.
 Too fast, too close, a car
 Passes; arsehole driver beeps, yelling
 GET OFF THE ROAD, WANKERS!
 They roll on, unruffled, dignified,
 And I think keep going, God bless you.

PATRICK SWIFT



REGGAEVILLE

Patrick Swift is a sometime music journalist based in London, who writes to express himself but also finds photography and visual manipulation to be an immediate form of expression.

Patrick wants to dedicate his time more to visual representation, but is currently juggling music, PR and writing, amongst other activities.

THE EDGE
ISSUE 7

SUBCONSCIOUS

GRACE CAMPBELL

There has been weightlessness
 Continuous falling
 Never stopping fear
 Lacking support in waking life.

There has been teeth missing
 Deteriorating like the dead
 Dentures from now on
 Embarrassment and loss of power.

There has been nudity
 Bare skin exposed
 People watching in peril
 Feeling shame and vulnerable.

There has been chasing
 Monsters of people
 Where's the Mystery Machine!
 Threatened when awakened.

Occasionally sitting at the table with the famous.

There has been waging wars
 Victory is ours!
 Look how many lives we lost, I could have saved him
 The bigger picture.

There has been heights
 An escalator to the sky
 And it keeps going
 It keeps going
 Keeps going
 Gone. Freefall.
 Destiny to fail.

There has been many kisses
 The one you love
 In corridors, in bed, in secret
 I love you.

Once or twice I met the impossible.

There has been the injured
 The ill, the fear of losing, the dead
 It could be worse after all that
 Afraid of being hurt.

There has been failure.
 Too much failure
 Tests, relationships, a person.
 Failure.

There has been lost
 Running, searching, running
 Where even am I?
 Conflict in life.

There has been caught in a trap
 Maybe in a web
 Buried alive
 Unable to make the right choice.

I'm on that escalator again.

There has been darkness
 I don't know where I am
 Ghosts, monsters, humans
 Help me!

There has been cars
 Out of control
 A long coastal road
 Or along a mountain
 And now we're rolling down a hill, brilliant
 Heading for a crash, metaphorically, of course.

There has been letters
 You're next
 Sorry I can't make it
 You're missing something important.

There has been sex
I've been with you two and a half years
Wait what, don't you live in LA or California or something?
I just want sex.

I'm pretty sure you died twenty years ago,
What are you doing here?

There has been visits back to memories
Hello school, and you finally got rid of the PE block
I miss you.
My life was so much simpler when I had no responsibilities.

There has been parties
House parties
That was a good night, I fell asleep on the kitchen floor
I need a break.

All of this under fluttering eyes
and we all do it
One hour is supposedly thirty seconds
Try living one of my dreams.

SUBMIT TO ISSUE 8

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